

AMPHETAMINES

Stimulants affect the central nervous system. Stimulants can cause increased heart and respiratory rates, elevated blood pressure, dilated pupils, and decreased appetite. In addition, users may experience sweating, headache, blurred vision, dizziness, sleeplessness, and anxiety. Extremely high doses can cause a rapid or irregular heartbeat, tremors, loss of coordination, and even physical collapse. Physical exertion seems to increase the hazards of stimulants since accidental death is due in part to the effects on the cardiovascular and body temperature regulating systems. Fatalities under conditions of extreme exertion have been reported among athletes who have taken stimulants in moderate amounts.

▼ Amphetamines

Amphetamines are synthetic central nervous system stimulants that can produce various temporary effects, including alertness, increased energy, suppressed appetite, and feelings of well-being. As pure crystals, amphetamines appear as an odorless, bitter-tasting, off-white powder which is water soluble. Illicit preparations of amphetamines are often mixed with other materials and can appear as off-white crystals, powders or chunks. They may also be supplied in capsules or tablets, which may resemble commercial preparations. Amphetamines can be taken orally, intravenously, or by sniffing. Chronic users of amphetamines may experience many long-term effects, including severe anxiety, malnutrition, chronic sleeplessness, high blood pressure, skin rash, and increased susceptibility to disease. An amphetamine injection creates a sudden increase in blood pressure that can result in stroke, very high fever, or heart failure. People who use large amounts of amphetamines over a long period of time can develop an amphetamine psychosis that includes hallucinations, delusions, and paranoia.

▼ Methamphetamines

Methamphetamines are closely related chemically to amphetamines, but the central nervous system effects of methamphetamines are greater. Methamphetamines are made in illegal laboratories and have a high potential for abuse and dependence. Methamphetamine hydrochloride, clear chunky crystals resembling ice, which can be inhaled by smoking, is referred to as "ice," "crystal," and "glass." These drugs can be taken orally or intranasally (snorting the powder), intravenously, or by smoking. An overdose of methamphetamine can cause delirium, panic, irregular heartbeat and high blood pressure, circulatory collapse, nausea and vomiting, seizures, coma, and death. Chronic use is usually marked by rapid weight loss. Use of the drug depletes energy reserves in much the same way as physical exertion. However, chronic users do not replenish their energy reserves because of the insomnia and suppressed appetite caused by the drug. Severe vitamin and mineral deficiencies occur and greatly increase the user's susceptibility to disease. Chronic abusers of methamphetamines may experience hypothermia and convulsions that can result in death.



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Sources: "NIDA Capsules", National Institute on Drug Abuse, January 1995; Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, 1993, Rev. 1995